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# Discover Birding in the National Forests

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Bohemian Waxwing

Pacific Northwest Region  
Rogue River National Forest

**This Is An Invitation**—from the Forest Service to join the millions of Americans who have discovered the pleasures, fascination, and rewards of getting to know our native birds. Watching birds is a form of outdoor recreation that is steadily increasing in popularity. Here's an opportunity for you to enrich your life with this fascinating hobby.

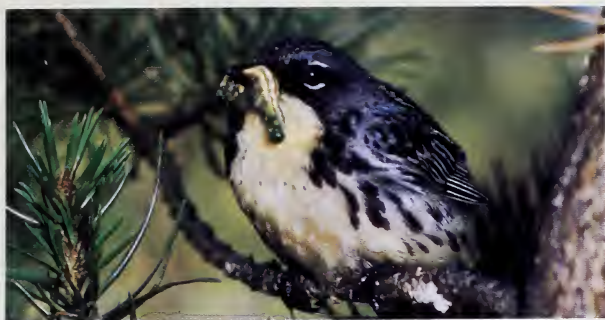
What exactly is birding, or bird watching?

### **Birding Is . . .**

**. . . Discovery**—every time you see or hear a new bird and correctly identify it you not only score a personal triumph but you add to a collection of fond memories. The sight of our national bird, the bald eagle, soaring on motionless wings against a blue sky, or the brilliant flash of black and scarlet of a scarlet tanager just returned from the tropics is not easily forgotten. These experiences add to your knowledge of our country's birdlife and sharpen your identification skills. You will become familiar with bird habits, migrations, and numbers. There is always the possibility of discovering a bird that has never been recorded in your area before. There are some 1,780 different species in continental North America. Ornithology is a biological science in which the amateur has contributed many new discoveries.

**. . . Inexpensive**—A good field identification guide and a pair of binoculars are the only tools needed. The identification guide will help you to identify the birds you observe, and the binoculars will further assist in identification by enabling you to see features that the naked eye cannot see. Most birders prefer binoculars that magnify objects 7 or 8 times. A higher power tends to magnify effects of vibration and, therefore, is less desirable. A central focus is essential and light weight can be important. Objective diameter is important, too. It provides light and dictates the field of view. Most birders prefer 35 or 40 millimeter objectives. The lenses should be fully coated. It is advisable to test a variety of binoculars before buying any particular pair. After the basic tools have been acquired, you are ready to join those who explore the beauty, forms, and sounds of the winged world.

**. . . A Hobby**—Birds are everywhere. They can be seen from your window or the deck of a ship. They are commonly found in yards, parks, and forests. The great Hudson River naturalist John Burroughs taught us that it was not



Kirtland's Warbler

Eastern Region  
Huron National Forest

necessary to go to far away places to see exotic birds. With careful observation they could be seen at our very doorsteps. Deserts, prairies, marshes, and beaches also have their own typical birdlife. Wherever there is natural life, there will be birds. Business trips and shopping errands can be much more interesting if birds are consciously noticed. A family outing becomes more than just a picnic. Looking for birds is a lifetime recreation—a re-creation in the true sense of the word.

Although feeding stations in your garden or apartment windows can attract birds for closer views, the quest for new species can break your weekly routine and take you to different landscapes and fresher air.

Once you have discovered the excitement of birding you will find yourself visiting new places and viewing old haunts with a different perspective. Birds can be observed on a quiet walk in a garden or park. For the more adventurous, scaling a cliff, hiking up a mountain, or even prowling through the quiet dawn to spot a particular bird can be rewarding. Indeed, birding combined with walking can be an enjoyable physical exercise.

. . . **Science and Art**—An immeasurable amount of time has been spent observing birds. The science of studying birds is called ornithology. The annual Christmas Bird Counts sponsored by the National Audubon Society involve 35,000 amateurs and professional participants each year, with the number steadily increasing. Everyone participating is assigned to a dawn-to-dusk survey of an area to tabulate the number of species present and the number of individual birds. The surveys, made during a 2-week period at Christmas, have been conducted for over 75 years. The results have been invaluable in determining the increase or decrease in bird numbers, the expansion or recession of a species, range, and the impact—both positive and negative—of human activities. Even though the number of scheduled bird counts has reached well over 1,200 in recent years, more participants and new count areas are welcomed. The Christmas Bird Counts are carefully analyzed and published by the National Audubon Society in the bimonthly periodical *American Birds*. This publication contains results of other surveys, all done primarily by the skilled and dedicated amateur. For information, write to: American



Blackburnian Warbler

Southern Region  
Jefferson National Forest

Birds, 950 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10022.

Once you are able to easily recognize many of the common birds, you will find that more patience, a sharp eye for detail, keen ears, and a good memory are required to find the rarer and difficult-to-see birds. Breeding bird surveys, winter population studies, and the analysis of local migration patterns are dependent primarily on the amateur who has artfully sharpened his identification skills to a fine point. Personal satisfaction is achieved when these skills are mastered and when they are shared. Moreover, the observation and analysis of bird populations have aided us immeasurably in detecting pollution in our environment, thus contributing to improvement in the quality of life for human beings.

Birding, like any hobby, has its own techniques. A noise made by "kissing" the back of your hand rapidly will often cause birds to fly in quite close. Birds will respond quickly to this sound because it resembles a distress call. The sound takes a little practice, but it works well once the technique has been mastered. Birds also react to a noise made by pursing the lips and making a sequence of sounds which sound roughly like, "p-s-s-t, p-s-s-t". These techniques for bringing birds in close are known as "squeaking" and "pishing".

. . . **Companionship**—no matter where you live, there is someone who will share your enthusiasm and be helpful to you in your quest for birds. You will find kindred spirits ready to help wherever you travel. A common bond of interest among birders and the excitement of sharing invites friendly relationships. Observing birds can be enjoyed alone or with a group of any size. Birding has no age limitations. A 7-year-old will experience the same thrills as a 70-year-old. Birding can be done from a car, boat, snowshoes, skis, horseback, bicycle, etc., as well as on foot. In many areas birds are so accustomed to automobiles that they accept them as part of their habitat as readily as they do trees and shrubs.

Companionship takes on a different meaning when the excitement of seeing a new bird is shared or the return of a known one in the spring is noted.

Many birders keep a list of the birds they identify. These lists



Bob White Quail

Southern Region  
Mississippi National Forests

are called "Life Lists"—a cumulative and rewarding record of birds seen, identified, and rarely forgotten. "Year Lists," starting on January 1, are also kept. "Yard Lists" are kept to record the birds identified around the home. Rarely do the spirit of competition and that of sincere friendliness combine as amenable as they do with birders. Finders of rarities are always willing to share. Many American cities have "Hot Lines" where you can telephone to hear recorded messages about unusual birds that have been observed in local areas. Many localities have printed bird checklists that give the type and abundance of the various species found in that area.

Most areas have an Audubon Society, local bird clubs, or conservation organizations. Your local librarian is a good source of information. The biology department of a college or university near you is another good source. The *Conservation Directory*, published by the National Wildlife Federation, lists local societies, State and National outdoor societies, conservation societies, and bird and ornithological societies. It can be purchased at a nominal fee. The national organization also has free material available, including a pamphlet on how to make a bird sanctuary in your own backyard. Write to: The National Wildlife Federation, 1412 Sixteenth Street, N. W., Washington, D. C. 20036. State bird clubs, ornithological societies, and nature centers sponsor activities where the beginner can meet with and learn from the experienced ornithologist.

The National Audubon Society has local chapters that readily welcome new members. Write to: National Audubon Society, 950 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10022. Both the National Wildlife Federation and the National Audubon Society are knowledgeable in all forms of wildlife. They are qualified to advise you should your interests increase to study animal life or botany.

### **Birding in the National Forests**

The Forest Service encourages you to try birding in the National Forests and National Grasslands. Through birding, you can become familiar with the Forest Service's role of protection and management, which includes recreation, timber, wildlife, water, wilderness, and range management on 187 million acres of nature's beauty. Many of these forests and grasslands appear as they did before the first colonists arrived 300 years ago.



Clark Nutcracker

Pacific Northwest Region  
Malheur National Forest

Many birds reside year-round in the National Forests. Gray jays, in the West, and blue jays, in the East, are common in the hardwood and conifer forests. The hairy woodpecker and the downy woodpecker are common in both open and timbered areas. The great blue heron is prevalent near lakes and shores. The black-capped chickadee is found in Northern hardwood forests. The National Forests offer a wide variety of habitats for birds.

Special protection is provided for threatened and endangered species. Action has been taken to preserve the California condor in the Los Padres National Forest. Regulations have been established to preserve and protect the extremely rare Kirtland's Warbler in the Kirtland's Warbler Management Area on the Huron National Forest. This bird resides only in this particular area of Michigan.

Special efforts also are taken to provide nesting sites for other birds, too. Examples are the dead trees in areas flooded by reservoirs that are left standing for the ospreys and the care taken to protect trees frequented by cavity nesting birds in timber harvest areas.

Bird populations fluctuate with changes in their habitat—where they feed, nest, and migrate. Because of these changes, many of our most beautiful birds are more common today than they were 300 years ago. One example is the brilliant blue indigo bunting. Areas where timber is harvested are useful to this bird because it feeds and nests in low shrubs. Another example is the magnificent pileated woodpecker, once rare, now relatively common, because it adapted to man's presence, in contrast to its cousin, the possibly extinct ivory-bill, which did not. In addition to manmade changes in habitat, natural changes in habitat also occur through plant successions, hurricanes, floods, fires, and other natural upheavals. Each change or disturbance produces a variety of species and sizes of plants through a process called succession. As the plants change from old growth to new, the kinds and numbers of birds will also change. For example, the variety of birds in an area where trees have been cut is often greater than in an old stand of trees, although the latter has its own unique bird species at every level, from the forest floor to the tops of the tallest trees.



Osprey

California Region  
Lassen National Forest

People who study birds often become ardent conservationists and come to understand a great deal about all natural resources. The National Forests and National Grasslands are there for you to explore and enjoy through the sport, art, or science of birding. Birding is a nonconsumptive recreational use of these areas. Birders are urged to share their discoveries with the Forest Service and bird organizations.

For a list of National Forests and National Grasslands where you can bird, write to: Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, P. O. Box 2417, Washington, D. C. 20013. Maps may be obtained from the individual National Forests and Grasslands.

### **Publications**

Your local bookstore probably has a number of these and other guidebooks. Your local library may have copies you can borrow to try out before you buy.

*A Field Guide to the Birds* (east of the Rockies) and *A Field Guide to Western Birds*, both by Roger Tory Peterson and available in paperback, are excellent field guides. *Birds of North America* by Chandler S. Robbins, Bertel Bruun, and Herbert S. Zim is another excellent field guide. Companion bird records to accompany the two Peterson guides, "Songs of Birds East of the Rockies" and "Songs of Western Birds," are helpful in learning bird songs. *Birds of North America* has excellent range maps to help the birder quickly determine whether or not a bird is likely to occur in a particular locality.

The *Rand McNally National Forest Guide* by Len Hilts, offers detailed information on all National Forests and Grasslands.

The *Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds—Eastern Region and Western Region*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

*Birds and Game Birds*, Golden Nature Guide Series, Golden Press, New York.



American Wild Turkey

Southern Region  
Francis Marion National Forest

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